

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TOKYO 04872 141213Z

46

ACTION EA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9390

INFO AMEMBASSY SEOUL

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

COMNAVFOR JAPAN YOKOSUKA

USLO PEKING

DMDR USARJ CAMP ZAMA

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

COMUSJFJ YOKOTA

C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 4872

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT JA

SUBJ: APRIL 13 ELECTION RESULTS AND MIKI PROSPECTS

REF: TOKYO 4706

SUMMARY: CONSERVATIVES WON 13 OF 17 GUBERNATORIAL CONTESTS
IN APRIL 13 LOCAL ELECTIONS, BUT FAILED TO WIN IN EITHER TOKYO
OR OSAKA. LDP, OVERALL, MADE REASONABLY GOOD SHOWING WHICH WILL
PROBABLY ACCRUE TO PRIME MINISTER MIKI'S BENEFIT. AS RESULT
HIS HOLD ON PARTY LEADERSHIP IS NOT LIKELY TO BE IMMEDIATELY
CHALLENGED AND HIS ABILITY TO PUSH FOR GENERAL ELECTION --SHOULD
HE CHOOSE TO -- AS EARLY AS JUNE OR JULY IS ENHANCED. WE DO
NOT NOW ANTICIPATE SIGNIFICANT PROBLEMS FOR U.S. MILITARY
PRESENCE AS CONSEFENI DF REFORMIST GOVERNOR'S ELECTION
IN KANAGAWA PREFECTURE WHERE YOKOSUKA U.S. NAVAL BASE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 TOKYO 04872 141213Z

LOCATED. END SUMMARY.

1. IN APRIL 13 UNIFIED ELECTION, LDP WON 13 OF 17 GUBERNATORIAL CONTESTS, BUT WAS UNABLE TO WREST CONTROL FROM REFORMISTS EITHER IN TOKYO OR OSAKA. IT ALSO LOST IN KANAGAWA AND SHIMANE PREFECTURES. (IN 3 KEY MAYORAL ELECTIONS, LDP RETAINED MAYORAL POST IN SAPPORO, WHILE REFORMISTS KEPT POWER IN YOKOHAMA AND KAWASAKI.) DESPITE NET LOSS OF 2 GOVERNORSHIPS, PRIME MINISTER MIKI PROBABLY SLIGHTLY STRENGTHENED BY ELECTIONS, LDP IS IN REASONABLY GOOD SHAPE, AND OPPOSITION PARTIES UNABLE TO CLAIM REAL VICTORY.

2. CONSERVATIVES WERE ESPECIALLY ENCOURAGED BY THREE DEVELOPMENTS. FIRST, CONSERVATIVE SHINTARO ISHIHARA MADE GOOD SHOWING IN TOKYO BY HOLDING INCUMBENT RYOKICHI MINOBE (JSP-JCP-KOMEITO) TO VICTORY MARGIN OF ONLY 300,000 VOTES. (LAST TIME AROUND MINOBE WON BY 1,600,000.) MINOBE WAS NO DOUBT HURT BY HIS OFF AGAIN - ON AGAIN CANDIDACY AND SKIMPY JCP SUPPORT. ISHIHARA AND CONSERVATIVE BACKERS, HOWEVER, OVERCAME HIS HAWKISH IMAGE, WAGED EFFECTIVE CAMPAIGN IN OWN RIGHT, AND BUOYED UP LDP HOPES FOR NEXT TOKYO GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION. CONSERVATIVES WERE ALSO HEARTENED BY EASY WIN IN CHIBA PREFECTURE, WHICH MANY HAD PREDICTED WOULD FALL TO OPPOSITION AND BECOME PART OF REIGN OF REFORMIST ADMINISTRATIONS ENCIRCLING TOKYO CENTRAL GOVERNMENT. FINALLY, THEY WERE ENCOURAGED BY SUCCESSES IN HOKKAIDO AND SAGA PREFECTURES WHERE, AT LEAST ACCORDING TO PRESS, THEIR CHANCES WERE DIM.

3. MOST BITTER LOSS FOR CONSERVATIVES WAS THAT IN OSAKA, NOT BECAUSE THEY REALLY EXPECTED TO WIN, BUT BECAUSE THEIR MAN FINISHED FAR BEHIND INCUMBENT RYOICHI KURODA AND BECAUSE IT MEANT FIRST EVER ELECTION OF GOVERNOR BACKED SOLELY BY COMMUNISTS. WHILE REASONS MUST STILL BE SORTED OUT, IT APPEARS THAT INCUMBENT'S BUILT-IN ADVANTAGE IN TANDEM WITH ALL-OUT JCP CAMPAIGN EFFORT WERE TOO MUCH FOR BOTH CONSERVATIVE AND JOINT JSP-KOMEITO-DSP CANDIDATES. CONSERVATIVE LOSS IN KANAGAWA PREFECTURE SURPRISED NO ONE SINCE OPPOSITION

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 TOKYO 04872 141213Z

PARTIES WERE UNIFIED AND HAD ATTRACTIVE CANDIDATE, WHEREAS LDP HAD EXPERIENCED DIFFICULTY FINDING ANYONE EVEN WILLING TO RUN. FINAL LOSS, IN SHIMANE, WAS PRODUCT OF IN-HOUSE LDP FIGHT SINCE SOME PARTY MEN HAD REFUSED TO SUPPORT PARTY-ENDORSED CANDIDATE AND INSTEAD AIDED JSP-BACKED MAN, WHOSE REFORMIST CREDENTIALS ARE QUESTIONABLE.

4. ELECTION RESULTS SEEM LIKELY TO WORK TO MIKI'S

ADVANTAGE. HE IS IN POSITION TO CLAIM THAT HIS CONTRIBUTION TO IMPROVED PARTY IMAGE HAS HELPED AVERT MAJOR SETBACK AND, IN FACT, HAS BROUGHT ABOUT UPTURN IN PARTY FORTUNES. REASONABLY GOOD CONSERVATIVE SHOWING IN GUBERNATORIAL ELECTIONS, CERTAINLY PROVIDES LITTLE BASIS FOR ATTACK ON MIKI'S LEADERSHIP BY LDP FIGURES WHO ASPIRE TO SUCCEED HIM. MOREOVER, SHOULD MIKI DESIRE TO PUSH FOR GENERAL ELECTION IN JUNE OR JULY, LOCAL ELECTION RESULTS HAVE STRENGTHENED HIS HAND, ALTHOUGH OBVIOUSLY NOT IN SAME WAY AS WOULD HAVE MAJOR VICTORY (REFTEL). CONSEQUENTLY, TO ACHIEVE EARLY ELECTION, HE WILL PROBABLY HAVE TO ENGAGE IN BARGAINING TO GAIN ACQUIESCENCE OF OHIRA, FUKUDA AND TANAKA, ALL OF WHOM FAVOR DELAYING ELECTION UNTIL FALL.

5. MIKI, AS NOTED IN REFTTEL, WANTS EARLY ELECTION TO GAIN STAMP OF LEGITIMACY FOR HIS ADMINISTRATION AND TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF TIDE APPARENTLY BEGINNING TO RUN IN CONSERVATIVE FAVOR. HOW HARD HE WILL PUSH REMAINS TO BE SEEN AND WILL DEPEND, IN PART, ON DETAILED ANALYSIS OF VOTES FOR PREFECTURAL ASSEMBLYMEN (NOT YET AVAILABLE) WHICH GIVES DIET MEN BEST INDICATION OF STRENGTH IN LOCAL CONSTITUENCIES. MOREOVER, THERE HAS BEEN INCREASED SPECULATION THAT PRIME MINISTER WILL DELAY ELECTION TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF EXPECTED BENEFITS OF HIS OWN AND EMPEROR'S VISIT TO U.S., AS WELL AS ANTICIPATED ECONOMIC UPTURN.

6. COMMENT: WE THINK MIKI'S STAYING POWER HAS BEEN ENHANCED, EVEN IF ONLY INCREMENTALLY, BY RESULTS OF APRIL 13 ELECTION. IT MAY BE SMALL PLUS, BUT IS PLUS NONETHELESS. WHILE THEY ARE NOT NECESSARILY MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS, HE
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 04 TOKYO 04872 141213Z

HAS, DURING FEW MONTHS IN OFFICE, BEGUN TO BUILD UP RECORD OF SUCCESSES WHICH, IN ADDITION TO THIS ELECTION RESULT, INCLUDE EARLIER GUBERNATORIAL VICTORIES (NOTABLY IN AICHI), UNDISRUPTED DIET PROCEEDINGS FEATURING SMOOTH PASSAGE OF BUDGET, SPRING LABOR STRUGGLE THUS FAR WITHOUT CONFRONTATIONS, AND SOME PROGRESS ON POLITICAL REFORM BILLS (INTRODUCED IN DIET LAST WEEK). OBSERVERS STILL REFER TO MIKI AS "WEAK" LEADER, BUT THEM SEEM MORE AND MORE INCLINED TO QUALIFY THAT ASSESSMENT.

7. OF SPECIFIC AND MORE NARROWLY DEFINED INTEREST TO USG IS ELECTION OF REFORMIST GOVERNOR NAGASU IN KANAGAWA PREFECTURE, LOCATION OF SEVERAL KEY U.S. MILITARY INSTALLATIONS INCLUDING ATSUGI, YOKOSUKA AND CAMP ZAMA. WHILE NAGASU, LIKE HIS CONFRERES, IS HOSTILE TO OUR

PRESENCE AND ON RECORD AS PLANNING TO PRESS FOR BASE
RETURN, AS GOVERNOR HE WILL HAVE LITTLE LEGAL AUTHORITY
WHICH WOULD PERMIT HIM TO INTERFERE WITH U.S. MILITARY
ACTIVITIES, AND WE ANTICIPATE NO SIGNIFICANT PROBLEMS.
HOWEVER, HIS MOVES, ALONG WITH THOSE OF HIS JSP
COLLEAGUE, MAYOR ASUKATA IN YOKOHAMA, WILL REQUIRE CAREFUL
MONITORING.
SHOESMITH

NOTE BY OC/T: MESSAGE AS RECEIVED.

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